

# Freedom Day Committee votes name change for Pride Day

by Maria Stecenko

By a vote of 29 to 1, the Freedom Day Committee at its March first meeting changed the name of its annual Pride rally to incorporate the words "Bisexual" and "Transgender," officially renaming the event the "Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender Pride Parade/March & Freedom Rally in Seattle."

FDC's vote reflected near-unanimous sentiment among committee members that a name change aimed at increasing the inclusiveness of the event was desirable. That vote—agreeing in principle that a name-change should take place—was followed by rounds of elimination voting to determine what specific name, out of 10 or 12 options, should be adopted.

In changing its name, the Committee followed a trend set by organizers of the National Gay and Lesbian March on Washington, who recently added the word "Bisexual" to their name.

According to FDC co-chairs John Hall and Angela Amundson, the FDC name change was proposed in mid-February by Ben E. Factory of the Seattle Bisexual Men's Union and Princess La Rouche of Transsexual Lesbians & Friends.

Hall said a group of people including Factory and La Rouche earlier attended the March on Washington Regional meeting in an effort to persuade MOW to add "Bisexual" and "Transgender" to its name. Hall said the MOW meeting was marked by contentiousness over the proposed additions, which Factory characterized as "the standard anti-Bisexual agenda."

MOW organizers did add "Bisexual" to their event's name, but declined to add "transgender." Hall said the frustration Factory and La Rouche experienced in dealing with MOW strengthened their resolve to change the name of the annual FDC Pride event. The name ultimately picked by FDC was one of those proposed by Factory and La Rouche.

"There are individuals in the community," noted Amundson, "who feel that Bisexuals are grasping onto the shirrtails of the work done thus far by the Gay and Lesbian community." Her own opinion, however, was that there was plenty of room for everyone under the banner of a sort of sexual rainbow coalition—"as long as they're as interested in my equal rights as I am in theirs." She said she felt the name change had a "strengthening" effect on the FDC.

"It may be harder to say now, but it's bigger in size," she said.

"It gets down to individual people and basic human rights," added Hall. "The struggle we're fighting is the same struggle that others are fighting, and I don't see where excluding them benefits us."

Among the name options that were voted down by FDC, or that never made it to the final slate, were: "Sexual Minorities Pride Parade/March &

Freedom Rally," "Pansexual Pride Parade/March & Freedom Rally," "Queer Pride Parade/March & Freedom Rally," "Sexual Diversity Pride Parade/March & Freedom Rally," and "Pride Parade/March & Freedom Rally for Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals and Transsexuals."

Hall said it was too early to tell if the name change would trigger significantly increased participation by Bisexuals and transsexuals in this year's Parade/March. He added, however, that the Seattle Bisexual Men's Union and the Seattle Bisexual Women's Network have both expressed excitement about the name change and are planning to march with their contingents.

"We've had Bisexuals on this Committee for as long as it has existed," said Hall. "But they haven't participated as Bisexuals." He said that transsexuals have participated in the Parade/March for at least the last six years.

"They (transsexuals) suffer most of the same types of discrimination we suffer," said Hall. "The straight community sure as hell doesn't include them. And that's a very good reason for us to be inclusive."

Despite his sympathy with the goals of the name change, Hall said he found it unusual that "all those names" had to appear in the event's title. "As far as I'm concerned," he said, "we certainly know who we are, and this is our parade." Even with the additions, Hall said, the name is still exclusive, inasmuch as "[it] includes four groups of people, and excludes others, such as the Leather community."

"My problem with the name," said Amundson, "is that it's so long. Even before we changed it, it was too long." (The event was formerly called the Lesbian/Gay Pride Parade/March & Freedom Rally.) "So I suggested we just call it 'Pride Day,'" she said, "which got all of one vote. Mine."

Asked why she thought the winning name had succeeded where others had failed, Amundson replied, "Because it was as long as it could possibly get. The longer a name was, the more votes it got."

Hall said he thought the name succeeded because it constituted a "small change" to the original name, merely adding two words. "That made it easy to justify," he said.

"I don't think we'll lose any people as a result of the name change," Amundson said. "But it has been brought up that when we sent out our first 1992 endorsement sheets, they had the old name on them, and it's possible that some of the businesses, individuals and organizations who have endorsed already, under the old name, might need to reconsider. Time will tell. I would be shocked, myself, if that were the case."

Hall said that while vote stacking (appearing at meetings strictly for the purpose of voting) has been a problem for the FDC at other times on other issues, it played no part in the name-change process. ■

# Hundreds of students push for Gay rights in Washington

Over four hundred students from across the country met with their Congressional Representatives and US Senators urging them to co-sponsor and support both the Federal Gay and Lesbian Civil Rights bill and a Congressional Resolution urging the President to rescind ROTC's and the Department of Defense's discriminatory policy against Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual people. The event was part of the United States Student Association's National Student Lobby Day in Washington, DC.

While the National Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Student Caucus, an affiliate of the US Student Association, was the strongest force in lobbying members of Congress, mostly non-Gay students, many of whom were student government presidents, executives and senators lobbied for the bills.

Because USSA has a strong commitment to higher educational access and coalition building, both bills were part of USSA's overall 1992 Legislative Agenda. The students also lobbied for issues that would expand higher education access for all students, such as the Violence Against Women Act, Minority Scholarships and Federal Financial Aid.

Mary Kate Cullen, a member of the

caucus's Executive Board and an openly Lesbian Executive Vice President for the Student Association of the State University (SASU) of New York, representing SUNY's sixty-four campuses and 404,000 students, said that "The caucus is not the one responsible for getting the student government leaders to lobby for these bills, it's students at the grass roots; it's individual Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual student groups being out and active that made these leaders see that they had a responsibility to represent their Gay constituency."

The National Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Student Caucus is an affiliate of USSA and networks, organizes and advocates for Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual students across the nation and in Washington, DC.

The US Student Association is the country's oldest, largest and most diverse national student union representing close to four million students to the White House, US Congress, Federal Education Department and in the national higher education community.

For info: National Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Student Caucus, 815 Fifteenth Street, NW, Suite 838, Washington, DC 20005, fax 202-393-5886, phone 202-347-USSA. ■

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